

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE  
Transcriber's Office

February 23, 1998 LB 1063

a period of time, up to 24 months, if they qualified, and again they had to be under 185 percent of poverty basically, where we would help them get on their feet, get another job, provide for their child care and health care. And then after that period of time they would be off on their own and taking care of themselves. And the result of that policy change has been exactly what we intended. We have reduced the welfare roles, we have transitioned people off of welfare. We have helped them get jobs, and we have done it in a compassionate, caring way, because we've taken care of their children with child care. We've taken care of their health with health care through Medicaid, and we have reduced the overall cost to the state of Nebraska significantly. It has been a savings to the state of Nebraska. What she is saying, what her proposal says is let's go back on the work we did on welfare reform, let's take away from those adults who want to transition off, and let's cut out that coverage, and let's go to trying to just continue to cover the children and that's all. If you take that step you will discourage welfare transitioning, you will discourage people moving into the workforce off of welfare, you will lose the momentum we have gained by the legislation we passed several years ago, and you'll hurt people because, in the transitioning, as they first leave welfare, they usually do not get good paying jobs, they usually have a difficult time, those jobs usually do not have health care. And to deny them health care transitional coverage will be a loss, not a gain, for the state of Nebraska. Now, I think that is the...that is, in essence, what she is trying to do, and then taking the savings and expanding the coverage to 200 percent of poverty. The only problem is that she has got a spend-down on that, that may in fact mean less coverage for children, not more coverage for children. (Laugh.) Well, let me be more specific. As I understand it,...

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: One minute.

SENATOR WESELY: ...as I understand it, Senator Witek's bill would cover 96 more children. So instead of 24,000, we'd have 24,096 more children, at least that's what the initial fiscal note says. It....and in the process of covering those 96 more children, we end up losing the ability to transition off of welfare. It's a mistake. This bill had no support in the hearing. We had one person show up in testimony of neutral, and